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IBM application and hosting expertise helps ABS build the big picture faster with eCensus program

More than 8.4 percent of Australian households have selected the online option to complete and submit Census forms.

IBM and the Australian Bureau of Statistics today announced that more than 720,000 households across Australia (including Australian bases in Antarctica) had submitted their Census forms via the web-based eCensus program, as of 8.00am today.

Usage of the eCensus application, designed, built and hosted for ABS by IBM Australia, peaked between 8pm and 9pm on Census night, 8 August, during which more than 72,000 online forms were received. During the 24-hour period of 8 August, eCensus delivered more than 12.5 million page views.

Despite as many as 55,000 households logging on simultaneously (8.47pm on 8 August), the eCensus application delivered 100 per cent availability through the Census' most busy period, from Saturday 5 August to Sunday 13 August. Average page response times remained below one second within the IBM environment.

Research on web-based Census initiatives points to several benefits compared with traditional paper-based response mechanisms, including increased accessibility for the vision-impaired, reduced reliance on field collectors, fewer spoilt forms, as well as more efficient statistical processing.

Glen Boreham, CEO and General Manager for IBM Australia and New Zealand, believes the eCensus program will help the ABS more accurately measure key characteristics of the Australian population, and in turn allow for better planning of services and facilities across the country.

"This is the first time the Internet has been used to capture information about Australia on such a scale," said Mr Boreham. "Capturing data online has the potential to greatly reduce the Census' logistics burden, and to dramatically speed up the collection and processing of data."

"This innovation has the potential to save taxpayers funds and, in line with the purpose of the Census, to enable Australia's researchers and planners to better address the future needs of our community."

Assistant director for the eCensus project, Peter Clark, said: "The ubiquity of the Internet, combined with the information management and processing capabilities it enables, make

eCensus a logical progression in the development of the Census program".

"The eCensus allows ABS to fully leverage the Internet in the task of building the national statistical resource and to define that essential snapshot of how Australians live," Mr Clark said.

"IBM's expertise in building and hosting secure, robust web applications around the eCensus was an important ingredient in helping us conduct the Census as a whole."

"The majority of feedback the ABS has received on this initiative from people completing their Census form online has been very positive."

IBM's role in the eCensus project dates back to December 2004, when it was contracted to design, build, test and deploy a web-based application to enable online submissions for Census 2006. Under the agreement, IBM is also hosting the eCensus application, using scalable infrastructure within its secure data centre network.

IBM teams from across Australia have been engaged on the eCensus project, ranging from application developers and testers in Ballarat, to architects and project managers in Brisbane. IBM has also drawn on the experience of its global Special Events Hosting and High Performance Application teams to ensure the project, the first of its kind within Australia, runs smoothly.

The application was custom-built using IBM DB2 and WebSphere software, hosted on IBM's Power 5 server technology. Key components include WebSphere Application Server, DB2 Universal Database High Availability Disaster Recovery, Rational Application Developer and Tivoli Monitoring.

To meet availability, scalability and security requirements, a System P server solution was deployed, using Power5 chip architecture and an AIX operating system. System P technology also allows for fewer CPUs, and more efficient use of space, power and cooling resources.

IBM hosted the eCensus application using a fully redundant, high availability, fault tolerant platform in one of its network of secure data centres across Australia. Both ABS and IBM support teams have been monitoring the system 24 hours a day using automated monitoring technology to ensure that problems are identified and rectified without impacting users, and that the application has sufficient capacity at all times.

Earlier this year, IBM played a major role in the Canadian national census, providing the infrastructure and applications for the Internet Response and Census Help Lines Channels, in which over 2 million forms were completed using the Internet.

The eCensus web site can be found at **www.census.abs.gov.au**.

For more information about IBM, go to: **www.ibm.com/au**

Take-up numbers & percentages nationally and by state.

	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	AUST
Internet returns	233,561	174,941	148,237	47,737	79,114	14,698	4952	20,054	**723,633**
% of estimated dwellings	8.2	8.0	8.5	6.9	8.9	6.5	5.9	14.8	**8.4**

| % eCensus take-up | 32.2 | 24.2 | 20.5 | 6.6 | 10.9 | 2.1 | 0.7 | 2.8 | |

(As at 8.00am Thursday 17 August)

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